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R E P O R T

OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS, ON THE SUBJECT OF

Biennial Sessions of the Legislature.

REPORT.

The Committee on State affairs, to whom was referred that portion of the Governor's Message which relates to the subject of Biennial Sessions of the Legislature, have had the same under consideration and have directed me to make the following

REPORT:

That it is one of rather a complex nature, and one upon which your committee have bestowed considerable time and thought, and are still somewhat doubtful as to the true policy of this State in reference to this subject, as it presents forcible reasons both for and against the system of biennial sessions ; but after the reflection which your committee have been enabled to give this subject, and carefully weighing the reasons, both for and against the system, a majority of your committee have come to the conclusion that the system of biennial sessions is the true policy for this State to adopt.

The people of the State are everywhere complaining of the burthen of taxation, a complaint justly to be made, and it becomes a wise and prudent government to relieve her citizens of this burthen as much as possible. It is believed by your committee that the adoption of the system of biennial sessions will tend greatly to

produce this desirable object—an object worthy of the most serious consideration, as effecting the present and future prosperity of our State.

The present inhabitants of our State require inducements to remain here. It is believed by your committee that many have already left, and that many more will leave, should the present onerous system of taxation be continued.

Not only do our own citizens require inducements to remain here, but more particularly, do emigrants require inducements to come and settle upon our borders, and while we continue to tax our citizens six mills on the dollar for state purposes, and for county, town, school, and other purposes, in the same proportion, while our sister and bordering States tax their citizens only two and three mills on the dollar for State purposes, and for other purposes in the same proportion, have we not great reason to fear its injurious effects upon the future prosperity of our State. Can it well be supposed that Wisconsin will, under this State of affairs, receive her just proportion of the emigration to the Western States. It is believed by your committee that she will not.

It is also the opinion of your committee that the present onerous rate of taxation has a great tendency to retard the growth of internal improvements in our State? Capitalists are sagacious in selecting locations for investments of capital that will be the most likely to return a profitable remuneration; and as the rate of taxation is a very important consideration, in this particular, have we not just cause to fear its consequences. Complaints are already being made by that portion of our citizens engaged in this branch of commendable enterprise. The rate of taxation is so high that they cannot live under it, and are asking at the hands of our Legislature a relief from this oppression.

Your committee are of the opinion that should the system of biennial sessions be adopted, and other systems of retrenchment and reform, that might be adopted, it would have a great tendency to fill up our State with industrious citizens, cause capital to flow in and our internal improvements to flourish.

Other reasons weigh upon the mind of your committee in favor of biennial sessions. Our citizens every where call loudly for the system, and in the opinion of your committee the voice of the sovereign people should not be disregarded.

The present complex and complicated State of our laws forcibly admonish us of the necessity of a change to biennial sessions, thereby affording an opportunity of becoming acquainted with them, and of testing their efficiency and utility.

Under the present system our laws are scarcely published until they are either repealed, modified, or so changed, as to discourage ordinary minds from becoming acquainted with them, and before an opportunity has been had of testing their usefulness, or their proper adaptation to our peculiar circumstances or wants.

The wisdom of all ages has admonished us to beware of excessive legislation, the force of which admonition no people can feel more than those of the State of Wisconsin.

Under the system of biennial sessions laws would be enacted with more deliberation and discretion, in view of the fact that two years must elapse before their repeal or alteration can take place. Hence the necessity of so many repeals and alterations of our laws would in some degree (at least) be obviated.

The chief objections which present themselves to the minds of your committee, against the system, which they propose, are these: That the newness of our State, and the increasing wants of our citizens, in matters of legislation, are such as to warrant the continuance of annual sessions.

Although these objections are somewhat forcible, they are not in the mind of your committee sufficient to overbalance the many reasons in favor of biennial sessions, as our general laws are such, or might be such, as to remedy all the evils arising from this cause.

Taking therefore the view of this matter which your committee do, they would respectfully recommend the passage of a bill

(herewith submitted) establishing biennial sessions of the legislature, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. All of which is respectfully submitted.

PETER PARKISON, JR., Ch'n.
DAVID NOGGLE,
PERRY G. HARRINGTON,
SAMUEL HALE.